



General Assembly

January Session, 2013

Raised Bill No. 6465

LCO No. 3522



Referred to Committee on CHILDREN

Introduced by:
(KID)

AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL THERAPY.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2013*) (a) For purposes of this
2 section, "animal assisted therapy" means goal-directed intervention in
3 which animals are used as an integral part of the treatment process for
4 individuals who have experienced mental, physical or emotional
5 trauma and "animal assisted therapy community" means the local or
6 regional entities possessing the staff and capabilities to engage in
7 animal assisted therapy including, but not limited to, the Connecticut
8 Humane Society, Soul Friends, Inc. and Animal Assisted Therapy
9 Services, Inc.

10 (b) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children
11 and Families, within available appropriations, shall develop and
12 implement training for certain employees of the Department of
13 Children and Families and mental health care providers, on (1) the
14 healing value of the human-animal bond for children, (2) the value of
15 therapy animals in dealing with traumatic situations, and (3) the
16 benefit of an animal assisted therapy program.

17 (c) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children
18 and Families, in consultation with the Governor's Prevention
19 Partnership and the animal assisted therapy community and within
20 available appropriations, shall develop and operate, or contract for, an
21 animal assisted therapy program. Such program shall: (1) Provide
22 animal assisted therapy to children and youths living with trauma and
23 loss; (2) provide animal assisted therapy to children and youths with
24 behavioral health needs who are in the custody of the Department of
25 Children and Families; (3) allow for collaboration with mental health
26 care providers to incorporate animal assisted therapy into the therapy
27 plan for youths or children; (4) promote the healing benefits of the
28 human-animal bond by providing interactive empathetic training
29 activities with therapy animals; (5) incorporate nonverbal learning into
30 the formulation of trauma treatment modalities; and (6) demonstrate
31 positive outcomes for children.

32 (d) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children
33 and Families, in consultation with the Commissioner of Agriculture
34 and within available appropriations, shall develop a coordinated
35 volunteer canine crisis response team. Such team shall consist of
36 various handlers and canines that have been trained and certified to
37 provide comfort and relief to individuals during and after traumatic
38 events. Such team shall operate on a volunteer basis and shall be
39 available to provide animal assisted therapy within twenty-four hours
40 of receiving notice to do so.

41 (e) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children
42 and Families, in consultation with the Commissioner of Agriculture
43 and the joint standing committee on children, shall develop a results
44 based accountability assessment of the results of the programs
45 implemented pursuant to subsections (b) to (d), inclusive, of this
46 section to (1) determine the effectiveness of animal assisted therapy, (2)
47 begin the process of identifying curriculum-based animal assisted
48 therapy as a potential best practice approach, and (3) demonstrate
49 positive outcome measures in hopefulness, tied to resilience in the

50 literature and other social emotional measures of healthy child
51 development.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	<i>October 1, 2013</i>	New section
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Statement of Purpose:

To facilitate the development and implementation of a state-wide animal assisted therapy program.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]